

U.S. Sees New Soviet Arms Violation

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WASHINGTON, May 11 — In two high-level private diplomatic approaches, the Reagan Administration has accused the Soviet Union of testing two new intercontinental missiles and asked Moscow to explain why this does not violate the 1979 strategic arms agreement, American officials disclosed today.

The second nuclear arms treaty permits each nation to test and develop only one new intercontinental missile.

Administration officials reported that new concerns had been raised by a second Soviet test of a missile known here as the Plesetsk-5. The first test of the missile on Feb. 8 led to political questions here about possible Soviet treaty violations.

Pentagon and State Department officials said the initial analysis of the latest Soviet test, conducted early last Thursday, had not been completed, but the missile involved appeared to be the same one tested in February. Much to American frustration, the officials said, the electronic data from the test had been "heavily encrypted" by the Soviet Union.

Two Previous Tests

Administration sources said American representations about two earlier tests, in October and February, were made to the Soviet Union in late April through the joint Special Consultative Committee in Vienna. The sources said the Americans responded more forcefully in a follow-up meeting on May 5 between Acting Secretary of State Kenneth W. Dam and the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly F. Dobrynin.

Ambassador Dobrynin met again with Mr. Dam today at Soviet request, possibly to deliver the Kremlin's response, but American officials declined to discuss the substance of the meeting and Mr. Dobrynin could not be reached.

After the session, however, American officials said United States concerns had not been put to rest and uncertainties about the pattern of Soviet tests had "not been resolved."

Although Mr. Reagan opposed the 1979 nuclear arms agreement when he was a candidate in 1980 and has declined as President to press for its ratification, his Administration has observed it in practice.

The Administration has recently come under pressure from Senate Republican conservatives to accuse Moscow publicly of violating this treaty, among others, on grounds that the Russians had tested two new intercontinental missiles and had heavily encoded data from the tests to foil American monitoring operations. The treaty bans encoding that impedes verification of compliance.

President Reagan, after edging toward public confrontation with Moscow, indicated at a news conference on April 22 that the Administration preferred first to pursue the matter through private diplomatic channels. Although he said earlier that there had been "increasingly serious grounds for questioning" Soviet compliance with the treaty, he emphasized in April the difficulty of obtaining "hard and fast evidence."

A few days later, Administration officials said, a complaint was made to the Soviet Union by Ambassador Richard Ellis, the American representative on the Special Consultative Committee.

The committee is a panel set up to deal with interpretations and complaints under Soviet-American nuclear arms treaties. Until now the Reagan Administration had used it sparingly to deal with the 1979 arms treaty.

A More Forceful Response

Administration officials said a more forceful, higher-level follow-up was made by Mr. Dam with Ambassador Dobrynin to emphasize the seriousness of American concern. Mr. Dam reportedly asked for a speedy Soviet reply.

In both cases, however, the United States was reported to have stopped short of accusing Moscow of violating the arms treaty. But in what was described as a tough representation Mr. Dam took some issue with previous Soviet explanations of the Feb. 8 missile tests, officials said.

In response to initial American inquiries back in February, Moscow told the United States that the Plesetsk-5 missile was a modified version of the three-stage, solid-fuel SS-13 missile permitted under the 1979 treaty. The Kremlin had already identified the Plesetsk-4 missile as the one new intercontinental ballistic missile permitted under the treaty.

Mr. Dam was said to have told Ambassador Dobrynin that American analysis

indicated the Plesetsk-5 exhibited characteristics that exceeded the modifications permitted under the treaty for an old missile — 5 percent change in length, diameter, launch weight and throw weight, and a clear retention of a single warhead — and thus it technically constituted a new missile.

The Issue of Coding

Some American officials were concerned that the latest Soviet test constituted an indirect Russian reply, adding to American anxieties that Moscow was proceeding with two new missiles.

These officials said the electronic telemetry data from the test was totally encoded, which many officials considered a violation of the 1979 treaty.

But other officials said the Soviet encoding had not been total, and cautioned that American assessment of the test would be hampered by the fact that an American radar-equipped tracking ship, vital to United States monitoring of Soviet missile tests, had not been on station for the May 5 test.

These officials said American interpretation of the Feb. 8 test had also been hampered because not all American intelligence-gathering equipment was functioning that day.

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